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# FOR THE STUDENTS OF ART

Sincerity and the Art Student—The Relation of the Art  
Student to the Past and the Future—The Art  
Student's Attitude to Himself

By RANDALL REEDE



## SINCERITY AND THE ART STUDENT

**T**WO great dangers lie in the pathway of every art student.

The first is the temptation of taking himself too seriously in regard to his opinion of the art of the past and that of the present. The second danger of which we speak is lack of confidence and an inability to have an opinion of *his own* in matters of artistic conviction. It were better far for the art student to bow down slavishly to his teachers, which, however, is seldom the case, than to parade silly and oftentimes vapid notions in a rather audible manner up and down the corridors of museums. There he often takes it upon himself to express to his fellow brothers of the brush his approbation or disapprobation of what the world has conceded to be the work of the great masters of all times.

One remembers that pregnant saying "The gods speak in whispers where the fools bawl in the market place." Silence is golden, especially in matters of art, and when the nestling aspirant is not yet sure of his wings for flight it is a much better plan to treat the old masters with silent respect than to give utterance to criticisms about their technique which sooner or later he will be bound to learn to reverence.

The second danger which confronts us, and with which we most often have to contend, is a lack of confidence in ourselves, which inclines the average student to copy the drawing and clever craftsmanship of his classmates instead of forging boldly ahead and blazing a trail of his own; that is, of finding his own personal technique, his own way of mixing color, and his own way of drawing and painting.

Emerson has pointed out that it is better for us to have our own faults than the virtues of another. But lack of confidence bespeaks at least an aspiration for upward flight, though the young aspirant may be timid to leave the nest where his artistic ideals have been nurtured.

We think that of the two evils the former is the greater, for the attitude of the art student who thinks he knows it all is ridiculous and narrowing, since it blinds him to his own shortcomings and to the future development of the little talent he may really possess.

How many students of this type have we not seen? Students who, possessing some imaginative ability, pretend that they despise anatomy and a knowledge of construction and values which they are themselves too lazy to learn. And the very lack of this knowledge is what prevents their crude, rough sketches of figures or landscapes from becoming really finished pictures, for one must remember that the grammar of artistic expression is quite as necessary as the rhetoric. Let us admit, however, that many also err who give the whole of their attention to the technical side of art and neglect the creative and imaginative fields. To be a complete artist one must have three qualities: first, the impulse to create; second, the will to execute; third, facility of expression, whether with paint or modeling clay.

Certainly it is a painful process, this digging on day after day at the rudiments when the broad fields of more mature art beckon the beginner. And yet it stands to reason that a practitioner of any art has need of training; the only thing that causes division of opin-

ion is the time of apprenticeship which hitherto has been unduly lengthened and nowadays is apt to be cut short by impatient pupils and conniving masters to the formula of "a finished scholar in Arabic turned out in twenty-five lessons."

One thing we must not overlook, and that is the equally foolish attitude of the art student who identifies himself with the latest fads and fancies and the so-called new movement in art. Such an art student generally seeks to cover a multitude of technical mistakes by pretending to understand the new art of the future; this, according to himself, does not require intelligible drawing or painting, and this, we might continue, does not ever find an intelligent audience for its appreciation.

It will do much to clear his ideas if he recalls how unsuitable to the aims and attempts of these Post-Impressionists, Cubists, Futurists and their kin are the tools that must be used by students and masters. Paints, clay, wax and colors, paper and canvas are not meant for such extravagant efforts and can never suffice. There is a useful and clever set of men who earn their bread by grouping and marshaling silks and other "dry" goods in shop windows. They are artists because they understand the use of proper materials; the others do not.

We are glad to conclude that the large body of American art students neither succumbs to the first danger, of taking itself too seriously, nor to the second of lacking self-confidence. Like Ulysses of old, the average art student of talent steers in the middle of the channel and avoids both the Scylla of conceit and the Charybdis of timidity.